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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted to the Economic and Social Council in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1823 (XVII) and Council resolution 1817 (LV). It is structured in two main sections. The first provides regional perspectives on three global processes: the post-2015 development agenda; the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States; and the review of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014. The second covers developments in selected areas of regional and interregional cooperation, including: additional policy matters addressed during the ministerial sessions of the regional commissions; efforts to promote coherence at the regional level, including through the respective regional coordination mechanisms convened by the regional commissions, as mandated by the Council; cooperation with non-United Nations regional organizations to promote development; and enhanced interregional cooperation among the regional commissions.

While efforts continue to focus on attaining the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations system has also embarked on consultations aimed at shaping the post-2015 development agenda. In this regard, the regional commissions have conducted broad multi-stakeholder consultations to identify critical elements to include in that agenda from regional perspectives. While some common messages arose across the regions, the consultations identified key priority areas for each region in terms of transformative or urgent actions, while highlighting the global challenges in building inclusive, sustainable and prosperous societies. The present report highlights some of the main messages arising from the subregional and regional

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consultations, including the role of key enablers of development and the importance of articulating clear means of implementing future development goals.

The regional commissions have held regional consultations in the Caribbean and in the Pacific in preparation for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in Samoa in 2014. The present report stresses several messages emanating from these meetings, the aim of which is to advance the sustainable development of small island developing States, related to such topics as regional finances and funds, coordination, and genuine and durable partnerships, all of which remain critical enablers of infrastructure development.

Since the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development was adopted in 1994, the regional commissions have been assisting countries in realizing the policy implications of the Programme of Action and in supporting their efforts to implement it. Throughout 2013, the regional commissions organized regional population conferences and forums to review the implementation of the Programme of Action in their respective regions. In the outcome documents of those conferences, the regional commissions identified priorities for action that are specific to their regional context and provide region-specific guidance on population and development beyond 2014.

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I. Regional perspectives on matters on the global agenda

A. Post-2015 development agenda

1. The regional commissions held a series of broad and inclusive consultations at the subregional and regional levels to seek the views and perspectives of their member States and other stakeholders on priorities for the post-2015 development agenda. Participants included representatives of Governments, civil society, the business community and academia. While some common messages arose across the regions, the consultations identified key priority areas for each region in terms of transformative or urgent actions. The present report highlights some of the main messages arising from the subregional and regional consultations, including the role of key enablers of development and the importance of articulating clear means of implementing future development goals. A more detailed account of those consultations is available at www.regionalcommissions.org/?p=481.

Messages from the regions

2. The consultations in Africa resulted in the African common position on the post-2015 development agenda, which was adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Addis Ababa in January 2014. In the common position, Africa's development priorities are grouped into six main pillars, each of which includes a description of the issues to be dealt with. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission and partners are now embarking on a process of advocacy and awareness-raising around the common position.

3. The first pillar of the common position is entitled "Structural economic transformation and inclusive growth". Under this pillar, African leaders have committed themselves to generating inclusive economic growth that will harness natural resources in order to diversify the structures of African economies and provide decent jobs to their peoples. Industrial development and the building of infrastructure, including transport, energy and information and communications technologies, have been identified as essential elements for the structural transformation of African economies.

4. The second pillar is entitled "Science, technology and innovation". Under this pillar, African countries will create policies for enhancing the development, transfer and diffusion of technology and innovation in line with each country's development needs. Countries will also strive to improve access to funding for home-grown technological innovations and for promoting environmentally sound technologies. The science and technology component of education curricula will also be strengthened.

5. The third pillar is entitled "People-centred development". Poverty eradication and the provision of decent livelihoods for all, to ensure that the proceeds of prosperity are shared widely, are the main drivers of this pillar. It is essential for countries to invest in improving and sustaining progress on gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels of society, with particular emphasis on the education sector, including in secondary and tertiary education, as well as to invest in providing universal and equitable access to quality health care.

6. The fourth pillar is entitled "Environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management". African countries are some of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, as Africa has some of the world's most fragile ecosystems. Improving natural resource and biodiversity management, enhancing access to safe water for all, responding effectively to climate change and addressing desertification, land degradation, soil erosion, flooding and drought and natural disasters are key concerns.

7. The fifth pillar is entitled "Peace and security". Both peace and security are necessary condition for sustaining development gains. It is important for African countries to address the root causes of conflict and prevent the outbreak of new conflicts. Countries must therefore tackle economic and social inequalities and exclusion, strengthen good and inclusive governance, fight against all forms of discrimination and forge unity in diversity through democratic practices and mechanisms at the local, national and continental levels.

8. The sixth pillar is entitled "Finance and partnerships". Having adequate means of implementation will ultimately determine Africa's capacity to achieve its development objectives. African countries need to improve their ability to mobilize domestic resources and strengthen their tax structures. In parallel, development partners need to implement fully all existing development commitments to Africa and provide quality and predictable external financing as key elements for promoting mutually beneficial partnerships.

9. The ministerial dialogue for Asia and the Pacific, entitled "From the Millennium Development Goals to the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015", was convened in Bangkok in August 2013 by the Government of Thailand with the cooperation and support of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Ministers and high-level representatives from the region adopted the Bangkok Declaration of the Asia-Pacific region on the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015 as the key outcome document of the meeting.

10. The signatories to the Declaration stressed the importance of poverty reduction, of tackling climate change and of the need to make transformative shifts in order to address sustainable development-related challenges. The post-2015 framework should incorporate goals that ensure universal access to health care and education, that promote disaster risk reduction and preparedness, and that are supportive of climate change adaptation and environmental sustainability. It should also promote the equitable distribution of income and the empowerment of women, improve natural resources management and access to energy, and address the vulnerability of small island developing States.

11. Adequate means of implementation are also essential for the success of the new development agenda in the Asia-Pacific region. In this regard, participants in the ministerial dialogue highlighted the need for a strengthened global partnership, enhanced implementation of the agreed development goals and an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process that involves civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.

12. Following a process of stakeholder consultations, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and regional and subregional partners held a consultative meeting in Gammarth, Tunisia, on 18 and 19 November 2013. The meeting was attended by experts from across the economic, social and

environmental fields, including professionals from Arab government agencies, regional and international organizations and major groups' representatives. The meeting provided a platform from which to inform Arab regional stakeholders on the ongoing international processes regarding the post-2015 development agenda and to discuss the regional perspective in line with Arab regional priorities and progress made on the Millennium Development Goals.

13. The discussions focused on overall progress in the region on the Millennium Development Goals and identified the key regional and national sustainable development priorities faced by Arab countries. Meeting participants identified three key conceptual issues that will shape a transformative development framework for the Arab region: (a) achieving a universal agenda that is owned by all national Governments — i.e. universal goals that cater to national diversity; (b) effectively integrating environmental, social and economic considerations into a balanced, coherent framework; and (c) establishing a new global partnership that embeds the sustainable development goals in an effective governance framework that will include adequate means of implementation and a robust accountability mechanism.

14. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) organized the Conference on Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Bogotá from 5 to 9 March 2013. The meeting included a Caribbean forum specifically dedicated to the challenges facing small island developing States. The outcome of the forum reflected subregional realities, provided an indicative road map for discussions at the regional and global levels and highlighted the priority of the region, which is to address social and economic inequalities. It was recognized that those inequalities have become so large and unsustainable that they contribute to social instability.

15. Other messages from Latin America and the Caribbean include: (a) the importance of addressing climate change and minimizing the loss of biodiversity; (b) the need to promote a global partnership for development, especially in the aftermath of the global financial and economic crisis; (c) the urgency of pushing forward the transformation of the production structure towards greater diversification, knowledge-intensive sectors and more sustainable patterns of production and consumption; (d) the importance of incorporating sustainable development principles into the policies and development strategies of countries; (e) the importance of creating productive employment and decent work for all; (f) the significance of understanding "the governance of natural resources" as comprising the full range of policies and institutions, fiscal regimes and mechanisms for the distribution of wealth in order to maximize the contribution of such governance to sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic development; (g) addressing extreme poverty and hunger and identifying innovative sources of additional financing for development, such as taxes on financial transactions and tax havens.

16. Financing for development was discussed at the regional meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing held in Santiago on 14 and 15 January 2014. At the meeting, it was highlighted that efforts to achieve sustainable development could not be limited to compartmentalized actions or to sets of projects or programmes that marginally address development challenges. Financing for sustainable development had to go beyond financing specific projects or actions. There was a risk that separating traditional development financing and sustainable development financing would

contribute to perpetuating a silo approach to development. A call was made for a paradigm shift towards development policies that focus on quality integration processes that go beyond trade relations and are truly beneficial to peoples in the region.

17. The region under the purview of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), with its high-, middle- and low-income countries, encapsulates many of the global challenges to building inclusive, sustainable and prosperous societies and has, therefore, an important contribution to make in the ongoing process to shape a development framework that is universal in scope and applicable to all countries. National consultations took place in 15 countries of the region involving some 250,000 citizens through town hall meetings, online discussions and the "My world" survey. At a regional consultation on the post-2015 agenda held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 7 and 8 November 2013 under the theme "Inclusive and sustainable development: perspectives from Europe and Central Asia on the post-2015 development agenda", participants helped formulate the regional priorities for the post-2015 development agenda. The key messages below emanated from those discussions.

18. The conventional development model, with growth at the centre, is not suited to resolving today's challenges. Conventional approaches must be transformed in order to take account of social and environmental sustainability issues. This calls for a new development paradigm involving radical changes in how societies are built, how economies produce goods and services and how they generate growth and jobs. One of the changes strongly advocated in the region is a deep transformation of production and consumption patterns, which is the only way to ensure that all people worldwide have equitable access to essential goods and services while preserving the Earth's natural resource base. It is also crucial to put equality and inclusion at the centre of the development agenda and mainstream this concern into the sustainable development goals and their associated targets. Moreover, the engagement of citizens, the involvement of all key stakeholders and good governance will be essential to implementing the future development framework.

Sustainable development at the core of the post-2015 development agenda

19. In the outcome document of the special event to follow up on efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (September 2013) it was recognized that sustainable development is at the core of the post-2015 development agenda. In response to General Assembly resolution 67/290, which established the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and in line with the mandate given to the regional commissions, regional forums on sustainable development are being held in the regions.

20. ECA, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, held the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals in Addis Ababa from 31 October to 5 November 2013. The meeting, which was attended by over 400 participants from the 54 African countries, provided a platform for senior policymakers to discuss and reach consensus on the region's sustainable development priorities and goals, which would, in turn, inform the African common position on the post-2015 development agenda. The main outcome of the meeting was the adoption of a set of 12 sustainable development goals; these goals were used in the formulation of the

priority areas identified in the common position. The outcome also underscored the need for Africa's priorities with regard to the sustainable development goals to inform the debate and the agreements to be reached at the global level on the post-2015 development agenda.

21. At the ECE regional consultation on the post-2015 development agenda held in Istanbul, potential sustainable development goals were discussed It was agreed that eradicating poverty is an overarching goal that will be reached only if poverty's main drivers are addressed at the same time, in other words if equal attention is paid to creating decent jobs for all, reducing inequalities of income and providing access for all to a wide range of public services, notably health, education, transport, energy and water. Achieving this goal is thus dependent on success being made on a wide range of other sustainable development goals. The establishment of national social protection floors is a powerful tool for ensuring human security, dignity, equity and social inclusion. Experience has shown that, with an economic and social policy mix tailored to each country's situation, it is both feasible and affordable to establish such floors. Universal health coverage is key to achieving health targets. Any goal on education should call for investing in early childhood education and redirecting public resources to quality education.

22. Governance should be both a goal in itself and mainstreamed into all the other sustainable development goals. Robust accountability mechanisms must be put in place, with national authorities playing a key role. Civil society, the private sector and the scientific community will also have to be part of such mechanisms, in accordance with their respective responsibilities in the implementation of the future goals. Comprehensive accountability calls for going beyond domestic policy and beyond borders and should, therefore, include international mechanisms, including at the regional level. New forms of monitoring progress in development goals and related targets must be established. Strengthening statistical capacities for ensuring reliable data, fostering new sources of data, including citizen-generated data, and using these various sources in policy debates and to foster transparent decision-making are essential elements of the data revolution that is being called for to track progress on the post-2015 development agenda.

23. ESCWA and its partners organized the Arab high-level forum on sustainable development, held in Amman from 2 to 4 April 2014, in support, among other things, of Arab regional preparations for the second session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The forum provided a platform for discussing the initial proposals for sustainable development goals for the Arab region made by ESCWA on the basis of the outcomes of regional consultations on the subject. A broad range of stakeholders were represented at the forum, including government bodies dealing with the economic, social and environmental fields, major groups, United Nations entities and experts from international and regional organizations.

24. A key message arising from the Arab Forum is that any future sustainable development goal must be rooted in a solid narrative that provides a holistic conceptual framework that addresses governance, peace and security and culture. The environment must be fully integrated into all the goals, and issues of gender and youth should be fully mainstreamed. The establishment of a universal social protection floor that includes all social groups, including persons with disabilities, will be an important step towards achieving equal opportunity for all, promoting

social justice and good governance, and sustaining development gains in the future. Inclusive growth can be achieved through a more diversified economic structure that promotes productive employment. Any future framework for monitoring economic development should be able to capture subnational inequalities and make it possible to target the poorest segment of the population.

25. Forum participants stressed the need for the means of implementation to ensure achievement of the sustainable development goals. A stronger focus on technology will be needed, including critical sectoral technologies for the region (e.g. water technologies), as well as the means of exploiting existing traditional knowledge; a supportive scientific research environment to promote the acquisition and transfer of technologies; and a true global partnership and regional mechanisms to finance sustainable development.

26. The inaugural session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development organized by ESCAP was held from 19 to 21 May 2014 under the theme "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and charting the way for an ambitious post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals". The Forum was convened by ESCAP in collaboration with the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the United Nations Development Group.

27. Forum participants focused on developing strong regional contributions to the global dialogue and decision-making, as well as national responses; identifying effective and inclusive means of implementation for a transformational development agenda; and defining the processes of the Forum to and beyond 2015. They charted a blueprint of a long-term intergovernmental regional consultation process supported by coordination and collaboration with the United Nations system, constructive and inclusive engagement of stakeholders, credible assessments of progress and an effective relationship between the scientific and policy communities.

28. As already highlighted, ECLAC hosted the regional conference on sustainable development in Bogotá in March 2013 and piloted the mainstreaming of sustainable development into its thirty-fifth session, held in Lima from 5 to 9 May 2014.

B. Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States

29. The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States will be held in Samoa from 1 to 4 September 2014 under the overarching theme "The sustainable development of small island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships". Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/207, ECLAC and ESCAP have made regional, interregional and substantive preparations in their regions, which culminated, respectively, in a preparatory meeting held in Kingston from 2 to 4 July 2013 and in a regional preparatory meeting held in Nadi, Fiji, from 10 to 12 July 2013. The meetings were organized in collaboration with the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and other entities of the United Nations system.

30. In the outcome of the Kingston meeting, participants stressed the ongoing challenges that Caribbean small island developing States face, including climate change, natural disasters, crime and violence, high rates of unemployment, especially among women and youth, "brain drain", non-communicable diseases and

other health concerns, and debt. They called on the international community to support small island developing States through technology transfer, capacity-building, capitalization of the Green Climate Fund and promotion of renewable energy, among others.

31. In the Nadi meeting's outcome document, entitled "Accelerating an integrated approach to sustainable development", the region's position and priorities were set out. Climate change and ocean-related issues figured prominently. Other issues raised were health, especially non-communicable diseases, social protection and inclusion, information and communications technologies, transport and energy, and renewable energy.

32. The two regional outcomes stressed several issues related to regional finances, funds and coordination. Genuine and durable partnerships, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, as well as cooperation among small island developing States and public-private partnerships, remain critical enablers for infrastructure development. In Kingston, the representatives of small island developing States highlighted initiatives such as the Caribbean Biological Corridor, the regional centre for creating capacities for assessing the risks and vulnerabilities of the region, PetroCaribe,[1] the Small Island Developing States Sustainable Energy Initiative (SIDS Dock),[2] and the Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Land Management. In Fiji, participants encouraged small island developing States to undertake strategic environment assessments and cost-benefit analyses of international and regional environment frameworks such as the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat and to recommit to the Pacific Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Water Management, to support sustainable development.

33. At the interregional preparatory meeting held in Bridgetown from 26 to 28 August 2013, States agreed on the positions and priorities that would be contributed to the global process leading up to the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. The priority issues identified for attention were the following: climate change, natural disasters, crime and violence, high rates of unemployment, debt and health concerns, renewable energy, ocean-related issues and the "blue economy", the need for special financing mechanisms and trade instruments for small island developing States, and the sustainable management of natural resources.

34. At the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, the regional commissions will focus on highlighting the implications of globalization and increasing regionalism for small island developing States in the context of the critical factors of their economic growth, as well as on identifying the critical economic challenges they face. The interaction with Member States will make it possible to define the agenda for the regional commissions, particularly ECA, ECLAC and ESCAP, in support of the prospect of sustainable development and growth of their member countries that are small island developing States.

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[1] PetroCaribe is an alliance involving many Caribbean States and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the purchase of oil at preferential payment conditions.

[2] SIDS Dock is an initiative of States members of the Alliance of Small Island States that aims to provide small island developing States with a collective institutional mechanism to assist them in transforming their national energy sectors into a catalyst for sustainable economic development and help generate financial resources to address adaptation to climate change.

C. Review of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014

35. The International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in September 1994, and its Programme of Action have served as a valuable framework for the formulation and implementation of population policies since 1994. Member States, through General Assembly resolution 65/234, called for an operational review of the implementation of the Programme of Action on the basis of the highest-quality data and analysis of the state of population and development.

36. Pursuant to that resolution, the regional commissions collaborated with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) throughout 2012 in the conduct of a global survey on the implementation of the Programme of Action in the 20 years since the Conference. Responses to the survey were received from 176 countries and 8 territories and areas. The responses contributed to the preparation of regional reports and were supplemented by technical information from United Nations databases, as well as thematic and sectoral studies prepared by the regional commissions. In 2013, the commissions organized population conferences and forums to review the implementation of the Programme of Action in their respective regions.

37. At the forty-seventh session of the Commission for Population and Development in April 2014, which marked the twentieth anniversary of the Conference, the regional commissions informed Member States of key outcomes of the regional conferences and forums. They also briefed the Commission on the progress made and the challenges faced by countries in meeting their commitments under the Programme of Action in their respective regions.

38. In the report on the implementation of the Programme of Action in Asia and the Pacific prepared by ESCAP in cooperation with UNFPA, it is noted that the region has achieved many successes in the past 20 years in terms of the implementation of the Programme of Action, including with regard to increased life expectancies, reduced fertility rates and maternal deaths, and better access to and knowledge about sexual and reproductive health services. These successes have come, however, with new challenges, such as rapid population ageing in some parts of the region, for which many countries are not fully prepared. While the opportunity for achieving the demographic dividend has passed in some countries, in others there is still an opportunity to harness its full potential. With an appropriate mix of policies, including job-led growth and effective school-to-work transition, it would be possible to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend.

39. According to the information on issues of sexual and reproductive health and of reproductive rights contained in the report, programme implementation is lagging, particularly in targeting young people. Lack of information concerning sexual and reproductive health and limited access to related services are contributing to unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions in some parts of the region. These gaps are also exposing millions to the risk of contracting HIV. Furthermore, sexual and reproductive health programmes must also reach childless married women, unmarried women and girls, and men and boys if they are to be part of an integrated public health system that combines curative, preventive and health promotion services. Despite overall progress in improving maternal health, in some countries the number of women dying in childbirth remains unacceptably high.

40. The key findings of the report served as the main input for the deliberations at the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, held in Bangkok in September 2013. The Conference, organized by ESCAP in cooperation with UNFPA, was attended by 46 member States, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.

41. In the outcome of the Conference, the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development,[3] participants put forth a rights-based, gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory approach to population and development strategies, prog.ammes and policies for the following 10 years, in the Asia-Pacific region. They recommended priority actions (in the areas of poverty eradication and employment; health; sexual and reproductive health, services and rights; education; gender equality and women's empowerment; adolescents and young people; ageing; international migration; urbanization and internal migration; population and sustainable development; and data and statistics)and included information on modalities for implementation at the global, regional and national levels.

42. The most recent review of the implementation of the Programme of Action has come at a particularly critical moment for the Arab region, as shifting age structures have led to a region-wide youth bulge, economic trends have increased urbanization and conflicts have caused some of the largest displacement crises in recent history. To understand the current state of implementation and emerging priorities, a wide range of different approaches were utilized, including surveys, consultations with youth, civil society, women's groups and parliamentarians, and technical studies.

43. The review has shown that while some progress is noticeable in higher-income countries, the least developed countries of the region are still behind and progress is uneven at the national level. Progress has been made on girls' education but progress on the promotion of migrants' rights and the impact of climate change on different population groups has lagged.

44. A number of emerging issues require urgent attention in the Arab region: the protection of vulnerable populations, especially those affected by conilict; the empowerment of youth, who make up almost one fifth of the population in the Arab region; the affirmation of gender equality as a fundamental right and enabler of women's empowerment; and the provision of a full range of safe, reliable and good-quality sexual and reproductive health services that meet the needs of individuals throughout the life cycle.

45. The regional conference on population and development in the Arab States entitled "Development challenges and population dynamics in a changing Arab world" was held from 24 to 26 June 2013 in Cairo and was jointly organized by ESCWA, the League of Arab States, ECA and UNFPA. Among the participants were 18 States, parliamentarians, experts, non-governmental organizations, youth coalitions and women's rights organizations.

46. The deliberations at the Conference resulted in the adoption of a declaration for the Arab States, in which the Arab countries reconfirmed their commitment to the Programme of Action, which they recognized was an unfinished item on the agenda, particularly for the least developed countries. It was also recognized that implementation of the Programme of Action requires strengthened efforts beyond 2014. In line with the global framework, the 129 recommendations set out in the

[3] Adopted by 38 votes to 3, with 1 abstention. Some countries expressed reservations on certain paragraphs.

declaration highlight the priority issues for the future implementation of the Programme of Action in terms of the following thematic areas: dignity and equality; health; place and environmental sustainability; and governance.

47. The results of the survey conducted in the ECE region show that effective progress has been made in the implementation of the Programme of Action through a wide variety of policies, programmes and strategies that go beyond traditional population policies to include social and welfare policies covering vulnerable groups and specifically youth, older people, people with disabilities and women. Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights have received special focus. The analysis shows that societies can prosper under conditions of slow or no population growth and of ageing if they adapt their institutions and equitably invest in people's education, health and employment opportunities independently of gender, age and origin.

48. The regional population and development review conference entitled "Enabling choices: population priorities in the twenty-first century", organized jointly by ECE and UNFPA, was held in Geneva in July 2013. Participants included representatives of 43 member States, academia, civil society organizations and youth, as well as members of national parliaments, United Nations entities and other international and regional intergovernmental organizations.

49. The outcome document of the Conference was a Chair's summary that was based on the consultations of the participants and adopted by consensus. In the summary, the Chair highlighted the challenges faced by the region, including unacceptably high differences in mortality and morbidity between countries and between groups within countries, unfinished work on gender equality and women's economic empowerment, political leadership and participation in decision-making, large inequalities in access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, discrimination and social exclusion of migrants, minorities and other disadvantaged groups, and increasing inequalities in access to employment and income opportunities which affect particularly young people.

50. It was stressed that the human rights of individuals should be at the centre of development processes and the centrality of sexual and reproductive health in the development agenda. It was also stressed that reliable data was needed, including data on vulnerable groups, and a call was made for more attention to be paid to protecting the rights of migrants, especially those who are victims of human trafficking, and to ensuring that governance is based on accountability, participation, transparency and the rule of law.

51. In Africa, the review showed that countries in the region have a high level of political commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action. Policies aimed at improving reproductive health and rights, gender equality, equity and empowerment of women appear to be implemented widely. Issues relating to the needs of older people, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, urbanization and internal migration, international migration and development, however, have received less attention.

52. Implementation of the Programme of Action in the region is seriously challenged by mega demographic trends reflected in changes in age structure, rapid urbanization and population distribution, and international migration. Moreover, the review indicates that implementation of the Programme of Action in Africa is

fragmented. Most countries face the challenge of trying to harmonize population policies with sectoral polices in areas such as health, education, economic development and social protection.

53. Besides being hampered by paucity of data and shortage of policy research, the implementation of the Programme of Action in Africa is constrained by cultural and behavioural factors and by certain laws and policies on, for example, the minimum age for marriage and the retirement age. There is also low coverage of social and health protection systems and a tendency to not register births, deaths, divorces and migrations, among other events.

54. The Africa regional conference on population and development, entitled "Harnessing the demographic dividend: the future we want for Africa", was held in Addis Ababa from 30 September to 4 October 2013. It was organized by ECA in partnership with the African Union Commission and UNFPA and counted with the participation of 53 member States.

55. The Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014[4] offers a blueprint for continued commitment by African countries and identifies key actions on population and development for achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development, peace and security. The document sets out a framework based on an approach to population centred on dignity and equality and development strategies, programmes and policies for the region. It includes 88 priority actions in the following areas: improving the quality of life of all people, particularly children, adolescents, girls, youth, women, older persons, groups marginalized on the basis of culture or history, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and displaced persons; eradicating poverty and social inequities; achieving universal primary and secondary education; achieving gender equality and women's empowerment; improving maternal and child health; promoting reproductive health and rights; combating sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS; and eliminating gender-based violence and all forms of discrimination.

56. The review of the implementation of the Programme of Action in the Latin American region showed that, in the preceding 20 years, the demographic transition had spread and accelerated more rapidly than predicted; as a result, practically all the countries in the region had benefited from the demographic dividend.

57. Major strides had been made in terms of including population processes in national development strategies, improving the status of women and reducing gender inequity, providing support to families and recognizing various types of family structures, consolidating the rights-based approach to policies aimed at certain population groups, extending access to sexual and reproductive health services, in particular to adolescents, improving health conditions, implementing territorial policies, and providing support to migrants.

58. Regional shortcomings and challenges include the weakness of the institutions that cater to the needs of the poor, the persistence of gender inequity, the vulnerability of a large number of families, the juvenilization of poverty, discrimination against population groups or types of families, failure to meet the target of universal access to reproductive health care, the prevalence of maternal

[4] Adopted by 52 votes to 1. Some countries expressed reservations on certain paragraphs.

mortality and failure to take action to ensure safe abortion, problems of governance in metropolises and lack of comprehensive sexuality education.

59. The first session of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and Caribbean, held in the context of the review of the International Conference on Population and Development and its follow-up beyond 2014 in the region, was held in Montevideo from 12 to 15 August 2013. Representatives of 38 member States attended the conference.

60. In the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, the following priorities for the period beyond 2014 were identified: the full integration of population dynamics into sustainable development with equality and respect for human rights; the rights, needs, responsibilities and requirements of girls, boys, adolescents and youth; ageing, social protection and socioeconomic challenges; universal access to sexual and reproductive health services; gender equality; international migration and protection of the human rights of all migrants regardless of their migration status; territorial inequality, spatial mobility and vulnerability; indigenous peoples, including interculturalism and rights; Afro-descendants, their rights and combating discrimination; and frameworks for the implementation of the future regional agenda on population and development.

The way forward

61. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development is an essential tool for the promotion of balanced and holistic human development around the world. Since 1994, the regional commissions have been assisting countries in understanding the policy implications of the Programme of Action and supporting their efforts to implement it.

62. By taking into consideration the variety of approaches that have been used to implement the population and development agenda and regional priorities, the regional processes conducted by the commissions, in close collaboration with regional intergovernmental bodies such as the African Union, the League of Arab States and the ministerial conferences in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Asia and the Pacific, have made it possible to comprehensively assess the progress made by countries, the challenges they face and the support they need to achieve their population and development goals.

63. In addition to demonstrating agreement across the regions on areas on which to accelerate the implementation of the Programme of Action (poverty eradication, adolescents and young people, population ageing, the empowerment of women, migration and data and statistics, among others), the outcome documents of the regional conferences on population and development have identified priorities for action that are specific to each regional context and that will provide region-specific guidance on population and development beyond 2014.

64. On the modalities for implementing the Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels, the following common messages, among others, have been identified throughout the regions:

(a) The importance and valuable contributions of civil society and other non-governmental actors to the follow-up and implementation of the Programme of Action;

(b) The need for effective coordination mechanisms for constructive dialogue and agreement at the local, national and regional levels and for effective cooperation, including through regional, South-South and triangular cooperation, including by sharing relevant experiences and good practices among developing countries;

(c) The importance of reaffirming the consensus reached on the population and development nexus, which should help to guide the formulation of a post-2015 development agenda, mindful always of the concerns, rights and dignity of all groups of people.

65. On 11 April 2014, the Commission on Population and Development adopted by consensus its resolution 2014/1, on the assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action, in which Member States were urged to address gaps in the implementation of the Programme of Action, notably in the areas of human rights, gender equality and equitable access to health care, including for sexual and reproductive health, and to respond to new challenges. Member States were also called upon to recognize the links between the priorities of the Programme of Action and sustainable development and to build on the progress made over the past 20 years in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

66. Governments took note of the outcome documents from the recent regional conferences on population and development and recognized that each outcome provides region-specific guidance on population and development beyond 2014. The special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action planned for September 2014 will also renew political support for and high-level commitment to the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development and define the work in the field of population and development for the years to come.

67. The regional commissions will therefore continue to use their power to bring countries together and continue to strengthen their partnership with United Nations agencies, intergovernmental regional bodies and other stakeholders, including civil society organizations, to address the regional priorities in a coordinated way and to maximize their collective impact for the benefit of those living in their respective region. In addition, they will engage in direct technical cooperation with member countries, upon request, to meet their population and development priorities including by providing them with high-quality normative work, knowledge development, interregional exchange of practices and capacity-building assistance.

II. Developments in selected areas of regional and interregional cooperation

A. Additional policy issues addressed by the regional commissions at their ministerial sessions and other high-level meetings

68. The seventh joint meeting of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development was held in Abuja from 25 to 30 March 2014 under the theme "Industriaiization for inclusive and transformative development in

Africa". The Conference was organized by ECA and the African Union Commission in collaboration with the Government of Nigeria. It brought together African ministers responsible for finance, planning and economic development, as well as governors of central banks and key leaders from the private sector. The Conference aimed to provide a platform for policymakers to articulate concrete proposals to catalyse implementation of the Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa initiative and increase commitment and actions to advance Africa's industrial development agenda.

69. In the statement that arose from the Conference, ministers agreed to make the efforts necessary to increase productivity for investment and the growth rate of the agricultural, manufacturing and modern services sectors in order to boost employment on the continent. They also pledged to address the problem of securing long-term financing for investment in manufacturing, including by reviving development banking and readjusting financial markets to make them more supportive of Africa's industrialization efforts.

70. The thirty-fifth session of ECLAC took place in Lima from 5 to 9 May 2014. As a basis for discussion among member States, the Commission presented the document entitled "Compacts for equality: towards a sustainable future". Two major challenges to development in Latin America and the Caribbean are set out in the document: to achieve greater equality and to make development sustainable for future generations. Patterns of consumption are analysed in relation to the economic, social and environmental spheres and their potential to increase the well-being of the population is highlighted, as is their problematic externalities in terms of environmental sustainability. The document concludes with a set of medium- and long-term policy proposals that need to be enshrined in social covenants in a democratic context, and highlights the institutional reforms that the Latin American and Caribbean countries need to undertake.

71. The seventieth session of ESCAP has two phases, the first of which was held on 23 May 2014 and the second of which will be held from 4 to 8 August 2014. While the first phase focused on management issues, the second will be dedicated to the senior officials segment and the ministerial segment. Decisions and resolutions providing further guidance by member States to the work of ESCAP will be adopted during the second phase.

72. The theme of the seventieth session of ESCAP, "Regional connectivity for shared prosperity", will be discussed by a ministerial round table. The focus of the discussion will be on available data, on evaluating the mechanisms through which regional connectivity affects regional integration and on how to strengthen regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific in order to achieve the goal of regional connectivity and shared prosperity for all.

73. During the ministerial segment, the following activities will be held: (a) a high-level panel on the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific; (b) a special event on inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific from 1947 to 2015 and beyond; (c) a side event on mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific region and paving the way to the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction; (d) the launch of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014-2024); (e) and the fifth high-level consultation on perspectives from Asia and the Pacific for the summit of the Group of 20.

74. The twenty-eighth ministerial session of ESCWA was held from 9 to 12 June 2014 under the theme "Challenges and opportunities of social justice in the Arab region". Various dimensions of social justice were addressed through four interactive sessions on social justice and a new development paradigm, economic policies supporting social justice, social justice across different generations and social justice: monitoring and measurement.

75. By fostering dialogue among Arab policymakers on this topic, the ESCWA session provided an important contribution to the forging of a common understanding on how to disseminate the principles of social justice in development plans, policies and procedures at the national level. The dialogue also provided an opportunity to build a regional consensus on which policies and procedures could be adopted to best advance national efforts in this area.

B. Coherence at the regional level

1. Regional Coordination Mechanism

76. The Regional Coordination Mechanism for Europe and Central Asia, jointly with the United Nations Development Group for Europe and Central Asia, focused its work during the reporting period on elaborating a common vision for the post-2015 development agenda in the region under its purview. After issuing the publication *Building more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous societies in Europe and Central Asia: A Common United Nations Vision for the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, the Mechanism and the Group organized a regional multi-stakeholder consultation on the post-2015 development agenda that was held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 6 to 8 November 2014. Information on this meeting is included in section I of the present report.

77. In November 2013, the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the United Nations Development Group decided to provide another contribution to the processes on the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda by carrying out a short analysis of lessons learned from the Goals and implications for the post-2015 development agenda in Europe and Central Asia. Furthermore, the Mechanism discussed the Health 2020 policy framework and evidence on the social determinants of health and the health divide in the region. It was decided that an ad hoc group should be established, under the leadership of the World Health Organization (WHO) office in the region, to work on the social determinants of health. The Mechanism also considered possibilities for an inter-agency contribution to the regional component of the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

78. The nineteenth meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Western Asia was held on 26 and 27 November 2013 at the headquarters of the League of Arab States, in Cairo. At the meeting, which was focused on the post-2015 development agenda, concrete progress was made on increasing the coherence of United Nations support to the League, including with regard to the Arab economic and social development summits. Most usefully, effective and coordinated United Nations support will be provided in preparing for the creation of an Arab customs union, in preparing a contribution to the 2014 report *Arab Integration: A Twenty-first Century Development Imperative* and in supporting a regional analysis of the socioeconomic impact of infrastructure connectivity in the region, with a focus on

issues of transport and energy. Also at the meeting, a joint United Nations-League of Arab States agreement was reached on coordinating regional engagement within the post-2015 development agenda process by, among other things, following up on national consultations, including with young people, and making the results of those consultations available for regional consultations and by supporting the preparation of the sustainable development strategic framework for the Arab region.

79. The fifteenth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, which focused on support to the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme, was held in Abuja from 28 to 30 March 2014. At the meeting, United Nations support for Africa's integration in the context of Agenda 2063, a continental action plan developed by the African Union, was discussed. The session was held on the margins of the seventh joint annual meeting of the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance.

80. Participants in the fifteenth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa agreed on the following: (a) Mechanism clusters should be aligned with the strategic plan of the African Union Commission for 2014-2017 and Agenda 2063; (b) a regional development cooperation framework should be developed that is strictly aligned with the strategic plan of the African Union Commission for 2014-2017; (c) there is a need for strong linkages between the Mechanism, the subregional coordination mechanisms, the United Nations Development Group for Africa and the United Nations country teams, so as to strengthen coherence and coordination; (d) the African Union Commission, in consultation with the United Nations, should set up a technical working group to formulate a comprehensive, long-term United Nations programme of support for the African Union, including for Agenda 2063 and the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme, which is due to expire in 2016; (e) an extended meeting of the Mechanism should be held on the margins of the annual sessions of the Mechanism to monitor implementation of the recommendations and support for the African common position on the post-2015 development agenda.

81. The agreed actions set out above have strengthened the alignment of United Nations interventions in the social, economic and political integration areas and in support of the African Union and NEPAD programme, with a view to promoting peace and development on the continent.

82. During the reporting period, the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Asia and the Pacific focused its work on articulating the region's perspectives of the United Nations system, both as a follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and as a contribution to the post-2015 development agenda, also taking into consideration the priorities and unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals. Poverty was a strong focus.

83. The following are some of the key highlights of the work of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Asia and the Pacific: (a) publication of *Asia-Pacific Aspirations: Perspectives for a Post-2015 Development Agenda — Asia-Pacific Regional Millennium Development Goals Report 2012/13*; (b) preparation of the road map for Millennium Development Goal 1, on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, which promoted the Zero Hunger Challenge initiative in Asia and the Pacific; (c) publication of a joint report entitled "Towards a green economy for

sustainable development and poverty reduction: an Asia-Pacific perspective"; (d) implementation of a "One United Nations" approach at the third session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction; (e) convening of the Asia-Pacific regional preparatory meeting for the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, held in Bangkok from 29 to 31 May; (f) planning of United Nations youth activities in the region to contribute to the more effective delivery of youth-related programmes and projects; (g) development of an inter-agency strategy for the improvement of gender statistics in Asia and the Pacific; and (h) convening of the thirteenth Regional Meeting of National Education for All Coordinators under the theme "The big push".

84. Progress was made in strengthening collaboration between the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the United Nations Development Group for Asia and the Pacific through a joint initiative to support collaboration in formulating Asia-Pacific perspectives in two main areas: the means of implementing the post-2015 development agenda and a global partnership to support such implementation. The initiative largely builds on the Bangkok Declaration of the Asia-Pacific Region on the United Nations Development Agenda Beyond 2015 and *Asia-Pacific Aspirations: Perspectives for a Post-2015 Development Agenda — Asia-Pacific Regional Millennium Development Goals Report 2012/13*. On 11 December 2013, the Mechanism and the Group organized a side event entitled "Implementing the global development agenda: Asia-Pacific perspectives on partnerships and means", held on the margins of the sixth session of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Engagement with non-United Nations organizations in the region

85. During the reporting period, the regional commissions continued to work closely with regional and subregional organizations in pursuit of their mandate to build regional consensus on shared priorities and common solutions for common problems, including by providing regional hubs for sharing development knowledge and good practices across the regions.

86. During the reporting period, ECE worked on reinforcing ties in its region and beyond, with, among others, the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the secretariat of the Integration Committee of the Eurasian Economic Community and the Eurasian Economic Commission. ESCAP continued to work with the Asian Development Bank, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the secretariat of the Pacific Community and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. During the same period, ESCAP signed new cooperation agreements or renewed old ones with the Eurasian Economic Commission, the Eurasian Development Bank, the Greater Tumen Initiative and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In addition, ESCAP signed a trilateral agreement in 2013 with ECE and the secretariat of the Integration Committee of the Eurasian Economic Community.

87. In close collaboration with other United Nations organizations in the region under the auspices of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Asia and the Pacific, the secretariat of ESCAP coordinated a review of the ASEAN-United Nations comprehensive partnership, in particular through the inputs to the economic, social and cultural pillars. In this context, the Executive Secretary of

ESCAP participated in the ASEAN-United Nations summit held in Bandar Seri Begawan on 11 October 2013. The summit participants agreed to develop a strategic road map for implementing the partnership during the period 2014-2015. The secretariat's partnership with ASEAN covers the areas of regional connectivity (including transport, trade facilitation and information and communications technology), disaster risk reduction and social development.

88. During the reporting period, ECA worked on deepening its partnerships with both the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank within the framework of the Joint Secretariat of the Commission, the Bank and the African Union and with the support of the Joint Secretariat Support Office. During the reporting period, the Joint Secretariat continued to serve as a platform for regular consultations among senior officials of the three institutions aimed at enhancing coordination and increasing the impact of their interventions, particularly joint initiatives.

89. The Steering Committee of the Joint Secretariat Support Office held three important consultative meetings, in March, November and December 2013, at which the following major areas for joint initiatives in 2014 were identified: (a) higher education (with a focus on efforts to establish a pan-African university); (b) improvement of the quality and availability of economic statistics to support sustainable development in Africa; (c) the Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev) initiative; (d) regional integration; (e) food security, with a focus on the Cost-of-Hunger in Africa study; and (f) ongoing efforts to develop a long-term development vision for Africa (Agenda 2063).

90. During the year under review and in response to requests made by African Heads of State and Government at summits of the African Union held in 2013, ECA continued to support the African Union Commission, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, the regional economic communities and member States on various development initiatives, including in the areas of infrastructure, trade, regional integration, climate change, development planning, macroeconomics, industrialization and natural resources management.

91. The ECA subregional offices also provided direct support to African regional economic communities for the advancement of the development agenda in the five subregions of the continent. ECA interventions were focused on development planning, macroeconomics, industrialization and natural resources management.

C. Enhanced interregional cooperation among the regional commissions

92. Since the past reporting period, the executive secretaries of the regional commissions met on three occasions: on 3 July 2013, in Geneva; on 31 October, in New York; and on 17 and 18 March 2014, in Santiago. The meetings provided opportunities to the executive secretaries to make progress in respect of many items on the regional agendas mentioned in the present report, in a concerted and consensual manner.

93. With the objective of strengthening interregional policy cooperation initiatives on strategic issues and in close consultation with the executive secretaries, on 7 November 2013 the Secretary-General appointed a special adviser on interregional policy cooperation.

94. At the coordination meeting held in Santiago on 17 and 18 March 2014, the executive secretaries and the Special Adviser on Interregional Policy Cooperation agreed on a three-pronged interregional strategic policy initiative to address: (a) the regional-global nexus, by providing integrated regional perspectives on global issues with the aim of achieving more equality and of empowering the South in meeting its sustainable development aspirations; (b) cooperation of strategic interest to two or three regions, where the cross-fertilization of policies and best practices would contribute to meeting such interests; and (c) cooperation involving United Nations and non-United Nations partners.

95. Four criteria have been agreed upon to guide an enhanced interregional cooperation among the commissions, namely: (a) demand for cooperation should be driven by the regions; (b) cooperation should be transformative in nature and have a multiplier effect; (c) cooperation should contribute to the balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development; and (d) cooperation should leverage value added through best effective expertise of the regional commissions. In this regard, the following three priority areas were identified to initiate such cooperation: promoting equality, financing for development and carrying out a data revolution.

96. The interregional cooperation activities will initially be supported through a development account project on promoting equality. The project, which will be policy-oriented, will contribute to methodological thinking on promoting equality, including through a systemic and structural analysis of inequality in the various regions. In that context, the data required for measuring inequality will also be addressed, paving the way for further cooperation in that area.

97. The meetings of the chiefs of programme planning of the regional commissions also continued to serve as venues for sharing experiences and best practices on issues relating to programmes and the harmonization of business practices among the commissions.

98. In Santiago on 18 March 2014, ECLAC hosted the first joint seminar of the High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board. The seminar, which was attended by the executive secretaries of the five regional commissions, was held at the margins of the twenty-seventh session of the Committee. Participants in the meeting agreed on the greater importance of the regional dimension in tackling global development issues.

99. In this context, it was recognized that the regional commissions, given their greater proximity to trends and challenges at the country level and with national decision makers, can facilitate the role of regions as key players in the design of the future development framework and provide regional experiences to inform global-level policymaking. The regional dimension can also strengthen the regions' ability to foster progressive agendas, guide transformational change, reconcile diverse interests and articulate a development vision that reflects multiple realities, thereby adding new substance and innovative ideas to the development debate at the global level. The salient points of this dialogue were brought to the attention of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board during its first regular session (Rome, 8-9 May 2014).